



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION SERVICE
10 W. JACKSON BLVD.
CHICAGO, IL 60604

NEWS RELEASE

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INS Dismantles Major Immigration Document Fraud Scheme

*Ringleader gets 8 years, eight other vendors in jail, and 4 new indictments
arise from a related investigation*

Chicago, IL – Brian R. Perryman, District Director for the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) in Chicago, together with Patrick J. Fitzgerald, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois, announced the sentencing January 29 of two Mexican nationals for their roles in a conspiracy to provide false identity documents to illegal aliens in Chicago. They are the last of nine defendants to be sentenced under “Operation Mega,” an investigation initiated by INS in December 2000 and supported by the Social Security Administration (SSA) into a \$500,000 a year counterfeit document ring for illegal aliens that operated at the Mega Mall, a discount shopping center located at 2500 N. Milwaukee Avenue on Chicago’s northwest side.

Yesterday U.S. District Court Judge James B. Zagel imposed an 8-year sentence on **Aaron Mena-Perez**, age 38 and an illegal alien from Mexico residing in Chicago, after determining that he was the leader of the document ring. **Mena-Perez** is also required to pay a \$600.00 fine and received an additional sentence of 24 months for re-entering the U.S. after a previous deportation. Judge Zagel also sentenced co-defendant **Eduardo Javier Acosta-Rios**, age 31, also an illegal alien from Mexico, to 27 months in prison.

In May 2001 a search warrant resulted in the seizure of 2,718 counterfeit green cards and social security cards. It was determined that ringleader **Mena-Perez** received a \$50.00 cut from every set of documents sold, earning him approximately \$384,000.00 annually. Counterfeit identity documents sell on the street for between \$80 and \$120 per set, which includes a fake social security card and green card, and are routinely manufactured and sold to illegal aliens who use them to gain unlawful employment.

Mena-Perez and **Acosta-Rios** will be surrendered to the INS upon completion of their criminal sentences to be placed into INS custody for deportation proceedings.

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“Operation Mega” led to the initiation of an offshoot investigation into another counterfeit document ring operating at the Mega Mall. This 8-month investigation began on January 9, 2002 and continued through August 2002. On January 27, 2003, INS arrested four individuals for producing and selling fraudulent documents. **Taurino Armando Brito-Sotelo**, age 35, an illegal alien from Mexico who was previously deported; **Augustina Segura-Flores**, age 55, an illegal alien from Mexico; **Mario Sinchi-Chacho**, age 34, an illegal alien from Ecuador; and **Rodolfo Coronel-Ortiz**, age 38, a legal permanent resident from Mexico, were indicted for their roles in allegedly operating a fraudulent document ring. As part of the conspiracy, the documents were produced at various locations in Chicago, including 2953 W. Fullerton and 1338 W. 18th Place, transported back to the Mega Mall, and sold to illegal aliens, according to the indictment.

“The INS has a very active unit that is investigating illegal document manufacturers and vendors,” says INS District Director Perryman. “We will not tolerate this type of identity fraud to be committed in our communities by persons who seek to conceal the identity of foreign nationals here illegally. This kind of criminal activity is a direct threat to the homeland security of this area and this country.”

The new indictment contains only charges and is not evidence of guilt. The defendants are presumed innocent and are entitled to a fair trial at which the United States has the burden of proving guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

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